(d) if so, whether the Minister of Transport and Communication of Iraq desired the Konkan Railway Corporation and CSITA to take up preliminary work on the sky bus metro project jointly on identified routes in Bagadad city;

(e) if so, what are the details of major contracts signed with Iraq; and

(f) by when they are likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) No, Sir. Only a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between Govt. of India and Govt. of Iraq for cooperation in various Railway sector between the two countries.

(b) and (c) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

(d) Konkan Railway and SCITAC have presently agreed to work further on the possibility of implementation of Sky Bus Metro in the city of Baghdad.

(e) and (f) Does not arise in view of (d) above.

Financial and operational efficiency of the railways

4758. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry of Railways took a number of steps during the last two years to improve the Railway's financial health and operational efficiency and to enhance safety and security of passengers;

(b) whether the Ministry had tried to generate internal resources for development and expansion of capital intensive system, with a country-wide route network of 62,8000 kms. and 7,000 stations, transporting goods and 13 million passengers daily; and

(c) if so, to what extent these measures have improved the financial health and efficiency of the Railways?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Ministry has taken

steps to contain expenditure and enhance earnings so as to improve the operational efficiency of the Railways and to generate internal resources for projects. Many steps have also been taken to enhance safety and security, including the setting up of a Special Railway Safety Fund for renewal and replacement of over-aged assets in a time-bound manner.

In order to provide enhanced security to passengers, a proposal for emending the RPF Act and Indian Railways Act for greater empowerment of the RPF, is under consideration.

(c) As a result of the measures being taken, the operating ratio of the Railways is likely to improve from 98.3% in 2000-01 to 94.4% in 2002-03 (BE). The Railways have also been able to improve the internal generation of resources from Rs. 3187 cr. in 2000-01 to Rs. 4248 cr. in 2002-03 (BE).

Security along rail tracks in Assam

4759. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Governments are bound to provide security for rail tracks between outer to outer railway signals;

(b) whether, due to inability of the Assam Government to provide track security in 1996, the Railways had decided to have security patrolling by Railways' own force;

(c) if so, whether the Railways have recovered the dues from Assam Government to the full extent by adjustment/with-holding the payments due to General Reserve Police Force (GRPF), payable by the Railways to the State Government; and

(d) how much dues are still outstanding against the Assam Government, even after adjustment/with-hoding of the GRPF dues by the Railways?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.